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REGIONALIZATION OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN MACEDONIA

Engr Smile Smilevski

The purpose of regionalization is to eliminate the existing multiplicity of livestock breeds and in this way create favorable conditions for selective breeding. It is impossible to improve livestock breeding when there are too many breeds in existence. In Macedonia, the number of breeds is not great enough to present any real difficulty to planned regionalization. It is necessary, however, to make a selection of breeds and to reduce their number as much as possible.

Regionalization of cattle breeding has not been put in effect in Macedonia because the local breed of cattle and the low milk production, resulting from poor feeding and inadequate shelter, were inadequate to satisfy the demands of the urban population. The Ministry of Agriculture, the cattle-breeding establishments, and the SRZ (farm work cooperatives) had to buy whatever breeds were obtainable at a given time. In this way, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Municipal People's Council in Skopje last year acquired in the People's Republics of Croatia and Slovenia 1,000-4,000 cows and steers, mainly of the Siementhal breed, which is not regionalized in Macedonia because conditions there are not favorable for raising this breed.

The regionalization of animal husbandry has been delayed partly because of a quantitative and qualitative lack of skilled personnel. The few skilled field personnel were overburdened with many other problems and tasks, sometimes more urgent than regionalization.

In some areas, however, sufficient personnel and adequate breeds were available, and yet regionalization was not carried out. There were cases when a Red Metohija or even a Siementhal bull was assigned to a region where there are Gray Vardar or Montafon cattle.

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The new proposed regionalization of Macedonia is based on indigenous breeds, for they have developed according to their environment and they are better suited to existing conditions than any other cultivated or semicultivated breed.

The indigenous breeds make no special demands with respect to fodder and shelter. They are resistant to severe climatic conditions and to various diseases. They are sturdy and most suitable for use as a foundation in raising new breeds. This can be done either by crossbreeding them with certain cultivated breeds, or by improving their productive qualities by improving their living conditions, and through the application of modern methods of selection.

Selection of foreign breeds for regionalization purposes is to be based on present as well as future supplies of fodder and shelter, topographic and climatic conditions, and living standard of the population. The conditions to which imported cattle would be subjected must not be too different from those with which they are familiar. This principle was disregarded in prewar Yugoslavia, resulting in failure in crossbreeding native cattle with imported cultivated breeds. Transplanted to a region with quite different and unfavorable conditions, these breeds rapidly lost their superior qualities and failed to transmit any of them to the second generation, which usually was far inferior to the average native breed.

Yugoslavia does not have the necessary institutions and facilities for research and experiments on the native breeds. However, there is no doubt that if they were given better treatment, they would acquire much better qualities. This treatment involves improved fodder and shelter, a selection of first-class breeding males, and a sensible selection policy in general. It is indispensable and extremely urgent to establish a scientific-experimental institute with enough experts and equipment to make a thorough study of the native breeds to determine ways and means for improving them.

Horse Breeding

The most desirable breed for the mountainous and hilly areas of Macedonia is the native mountain horse, whose weight and strength should be increased with improved food and care, together with a careful selection of breeding stallions.

In the plains and any other areas where there is need for a strong, sturdy, and enduring horse, and where sufficient fodder is available, the Macedonian type of Lipizzan horse, a breed based on the native mountain horse, should be introduced. This project was discussed and adopted at the all-Yugoslav conference of horse breeding experts in Belgrade. The Lipizzan horse, which developed in the karst region of northwestern Yugoslavia over a period of several hundred years, is a strong and rather sturdy type of horse, with good endurance. It is the best all-purpose horse. This breed of horse makes no special demands for fodder or shelter, a highly valuable characteristic. This horse is easily acclimatized, and when crossbred, always gives good results. The Lipizzan horse is much appreciated even in countries with highly developed horse breeding.

Favorable results with this horse have been observed in Croatia, where an excellent type of Posava-Lipizzan horse was developed for all agricultural purposes. The Lipizzan breed is found throughout Yugoslavia and its use is growing in almost all the republics.

The first Lipizzans were imported into Macedonia and assigned to the state stud farm early in 1946.

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The Arabian breed is good for increasing the weight and improving the temperament and appearance of the native horse. It is well suited for mixing with native breeds to form an intermediate step toward developing a Lipizzan breed until a sufficient number of Lipizzan stallions are available. It is impossible, however, to create from the Arabian breed a work-horse breed suited for farm use. This is because of the Arabian's fiery temperament and its limited strength.

In mountainous areas where poor feeding conditions, severe climate, and limited communications require the use of mules and hinnies rather than horses, regionalization of mules and hinnies is advisable. Hinnies are preferable, for female donkeys are almost as numerous as mares, and with small second- and third-grade native stallions, a good breed of hinnies adequate for the arid mountain regions where communications are poor can be produced. Breeding of mules, however, should be restricted only to mares with certain definite visible or other defects which make them unsuitable for horse breeding.

Cattle Breeding

Regionalization of cattle breeding should also be based on native breeds. For this purpose, Macedonia can be divided into two regions. The first consists of the right bank of the Vardar River, except parts of Titov Veles and Kavadar srez. The Red Metohijan breed is recommended for this area. This breed is to be kept pure in mountainous areas, and efforts are to be made to increase its weight by improved shelter and feed and careful selection of breeding bulls. In the lower parts of the same region where there are better fodder and shelter conditions and where there are abundant rich pastures, the Red Metohijan breed is to be improved by crossbreeding with the Crveno Polje breed. This breed has high milk production, acclimatizes easily, and makes no special demands for fodder and shelter. The Crveno Polje breed is biologically very close to the Red Metohijan and therefore is suitable for crossbreeding. This region would include the following srez: Skoplje, Gorge Petrov, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Debar, Struga, Ohrid, Krusevo, Brod, Bitolj, Prilep, Demir Hisar, and Resen.

In the second region, located on the left bank of the Vardar River (Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka, Kratovo, Sveti Nikola, Titov Veles, Stip, Kocane, Delcevo, Berovo, Strumica, Radovis, Kavadarci, and Djevdjelija srez), the breed selected is the Red Vardar. In mountainous areas, this breed is to be kept pure, though its weight and milking capacity are to be improved by better feed and shelter and by special care in selecting breeding bulls. For the plains, where more favorable conditions and especially better fodder are available, crossbreeding the Gray Vardar with gray-brown cattle or with the Oberinthal and Montafon breeds is recommended. Both of these breeds have high milking qualities, as established by experiments conducted at the "Lisenko" Farm, at the "11 October" Republic Stud Farm, and at some other farms where Montafon cows yield over 30 liters of milk. The Oberinthal cow at the stud farm yields up to 22 liters. The Oberinthal breed can be made to thrive over a much wider area if existing feed and shelter conditions can be improved.

The use of the Montafon breed should be restricted to the fertile valleys of the second region.

Since there are over 150,000 work oxen and quite a number of buffaloes in Macedonia, the continued use of cows as draft animals, as in the case of the Gray Istrian cow, which has been adopted more as a work cow than a milk cow, does not seem justified. The problem of oxen will be solved as soon as mechanization of agriculture is completed and enough horses are obtained. A decrease in the number of draft oxen would create more favorable conditions for dairy farming in Macedonia.

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Sheep Breeding

The regionalization of sheep breeding also should be based on existing natural factors.

For sheep-breeding purposes, Macedonia is divided into two regions. The first is on the right bank of the Vardar River, including Skoplje, Gjorce Petrov, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Debar, Struga, Ohrid, Prilep, Brod, Resen, Bitolj, Demir Hisar, Krusevo, and Titov Veles srez. In these areas Sar Planina sheep are to be raised without crossbreeding, although their wool and milking qualities are to be improved by a careful selection of breeding stock. They are to be crossed to a limited extent with the Merino-Rambouillet breed, which will increase their size and the amount and quality of their wool. Sar Planina sheep should be developed as a dairy breed.

The second region, the territory on the left bank of the Vardar River, includes Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka, Kratovo, Sveti Nikola, Stip, Delcevo, Berovo, Kocane, Strumica, Djevdjelija, Radoviste, and Kavadarci srez. The breed selected for this territory is the Ovcepolje, which is to be crossbred with Merino-Rambouillet sheep to improve the quality and quantity of wool and to increase the weight of the sheep. This crossbreeding should be accompanied by improved feed, shelter, and care.

Definite steps are to be taken to increase the weight of Karakul sheep, to produce better quality astrakhan fur. To obviate the import of crossbreeding rams, which cannot adjust easily to Macedonian conditions a study should be made toward producing a domestic breed of Karakul and Merino sheep suited to Macedonian conditions and requirements.

Hog Breeding

In hog breeding, unlike all other animal branches of husbandry, where at least something has been done toward regionalization, nothing has been done toward regionalization, because of the rather special conditions in Macedonia. Hog breeding here is hampered by unfavorable climatic conditions, insufficient production of feed, and the high percentage of Moslems in the population. Experience favors the relatively inexpensive breeds which make no special demands for food and shelter and are readily adjustable to local conditions. The Mangalica breed appears to satisfy these conditions, and at the same time is one of the fattest breeds. Raising these hogs is not difficult since they do not require special food and shelter. They are sturdy and resistant to severe climatic conditions. The hog-breeding agricultural-experiment institutions should make a detailed study of other breeds, especially the Morava hog. A number of breeding hogs and sows have been acquired for research purposes.

Poultry Raising

It is advisable to limit imports of breeding stock, and concentrate on providing good feed, shelter, and skilled personnel. Native breeds should be taken as a base. Breeding stock should be selected preferably from the so-called Black Hen breed, found mostly in Sveti Nikola Srez. This is a rather large hen, and the farmers are quite satisfied with its egg production. In those areas where conditions favorable to poultry raising already have been created, it seems advisable to continue to promote the Rhode Island breed for meat and egg production, and the Leghorn breed for eggs. Leghorns preferably are to be raised in areas with a developed communications network and in highly populated and industrial areas. In other areas, the Rhode Island breed is preferred. Goose and duck raising are not sufficiently developed in Macedonia, although conditions are quite favorable. Preference should be given to Khaki Campbell ducks and to Novi Pazar geese.

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Rabbit Breeding

Meat, skin, and fur breeds of rabbits are the best for adoption in Macedonia. Close to large population centers, where there is a heavy demand, the Belgian Giant /Belgian Hare? Flemish Giant? breed should be raised to satisfy the demand for meat and skins. The Chinchilla and Gray Vienna types should be raised for fur. Later, when sufficient skilled personnel are available and experience has been gained in manufacturing high-quality wool, the introduction of Angora rabbits would appear advisable. There is no need for regionalization of rabbit breeding, nor would it be justified. Rabbit breeding is determined solely by the demand of the population and the industrial demand for meat, skins, and furs.

Conclusions

Regionalization should meet the following conditions:

1. The regulations of the regionalization plan are to be strictly enforced by administrative and other authorities, to prohibit the import of un-regionalized breeds and alien strains and to prevent border violations.
2. There must be proper distribution of male breeding animals in compliance with the regionalization plan. The location and organization of breeding stations from now on should follow the regionalization plan.
3. Top priority is to be given to the organization of a cattle-breeding experimental center, which will exercise over-all direction and supervision over cattle breeding in Macedonia. This work will be based on research and experiments, primarily with native breeds of cattle.
4. Sufficient experimental centers, such as experimental selective-breeding stations for sheep, cattle, hogs, and poultry, as well as horse-breeding posts and a system of permanent breeding stations, are to be organized and put in operation immediately. Research must be carried on in all branches of animal husbandry represented in the respective areas.
5. To obviate importing breeding stock from abroad, and to increase pure-bred stock, the state cattle farms must start an immediate selection of animals belonging to various cultivated breeds and must develop breeding herds. Special care is to be used in raising the offspring.
6. Urgent steps are to be taken for the procurement and selection of breeding herds of native cattle, horses, sheep, and other livestock.
7. As cultivated breeds of livestock are introduced, feed and shelter must be improved, and skilled personnel must be trained to handle selective-breeding projects.

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